

Staff Picks



Beyond the Headlines ? New Books About Current Issues

Tired of hearing news stories that just skim the surface and ignore the deeper issues? Check out these new nonfiction titles examining a host of current issues, from environmental concerns to drones, the health industry to feminism in the 21st century and beyond. Written in an accessible, narrative style that doesn't skimp on facts while not getting bogged down in jargon or statistics, these books are great for those looking for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues that compel us today.

Compiled by: Chris H.



Big Thirst: The Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water

Charles Fishman 333.91 Fis

The water coming out of your kitchen tap is four billion years old and might well have been sipped by a Tyrannosaurus rex. Unlike most precious resources, water cannot be used up; it can always be made clean enough again to drink - indeed, water can be made so clean that it's toxic. Water is the most vital substance in our lives but also more amazing and mysterious than we appreciate. As Charles Fishman brings vibrantly to life in this surprising and mind-changing narrative, water runs our world in a host of awe-inspiring ways, yet we take it completely for granted. But the era of easy water is over.



Countdown: Our Last, Best Hope for a Future Earth?

Alan Weisman 304.2 Wei

Weisman traveled to more than 20 countries to ask what experts agreed were the most important questions on Earth - and also the hardest: How many humans can the planet hold without capsizing? How robust must the Earth's ecosystem be to assure our continued existence? Can we know which other species are essential to our survival? And, how might we actually arrive at a stable, optimum population, and design an economy to allow genuine prosperity without endless growth?



Cut it Out: The C-section Epidemic in America

Theresa Morris 618.86 Mor

One third of U.S. births are by C-section. Morris examines the reasons for this 50 percent surge over the last decade, including the trend of defensive medicine and issues of convenience often spoken about. In addition, she highlights political devaluation of women, medical and insurance industry motives, and changes in medical training as factors in what she sees as a dangerous pursuit of a perfect birth.



Killing Machine: The American Presidency in the Age of Drone Warfare

Lloyd C. Gardner 352.235 Gar

Examining recent presidential policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, Gardner recounts the criticisms of drone warfare ? secretive assassinations ordered by the White House that play havoc with allies and feed insurgency with the deaths of innocent bystanders, ultimately flouting our Constitution.



Knocking on Heaven's Door: The Path to a Better Way of Death

Katy Butler

616.029 But

Outlining a less invasive, more humane approach to end-of-life care that reveals the potentially traumatic practices of modern medicine, Butler shares the stories of her parents' struggles to achieve peaceful and natural deaths while explaining the political and technological factors that are interfering with patient preferences.



Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice

Martha Craven Nussbaum 320.019 Nus

Nussbaum argues that a just society derives from the cultivation and liberation of emotions, especially love. Analyzing the topic through philosophy, primatology, psychology, and the fine arts and literature, she asks how a society can promote social justice in the face of fears, resentments, and competitive concerns.



Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools

Diane Ravitch 379.3 Rav

Through an analysis of political education policy and the actual state of education, Ravitch argues that the mission of public education—preparing young people to take part in a democracy—cannot be fulfilled by competition between private corporations and public schools to increase test scores in reading and math at the expense of other subjects.



Renewable: The World-Changing Power of Alternative Energy

Jeremy Shere 330.794 She

Rather than attempting to prove or disprove the merits of one form of energy over another, Shere seeks to inform readers of the realities of each source of alternative energy through historical exploration and a journey to witness each energy source in action and speak to the experts.



The Endangered Species Road Trip: A Summer's Worth of Dingy Motels, Poison Oak, Ravenous Insects, and the Rarest Species in North America

Cameron MacDonald 333.9522 Mac

MacDonald recounts his four-month road trip to learn more about the rare species he teaches at his university, accompanied by his wife, children, and dog. This book, part travelogue, part environmental primer, is saved from being a grim documentation of extinction by MacDonald's comedic and engaging style of writing.



The XX Factor: How the Rise of Working Women Has Created a Far Less Equal World

Alison Wolfe 331.4 Wol

An esteemed British economist explores how the growing number of accomplished, professional women has impacted society, considering multiple perspectives on how the definition of female success has changed in ways that may not be supporting a woman's best interests. Wolfe examines women in the work force, higher education, money, sexual behavior, and family dynamics in a controversial yet thoughtful survey of female elites in the 21st century.



Wonder Women: Sex, Power, and the Quest for Perfection

Debora L. Spar 305.42 Spa

In this compulsively readable book, Spar explores how American women's lives have—and have not—changed over the past fifty years. Armed with reams of new research, she details how women struggled for power and instead got stuck in an endless quest for perfection. The challenges confronting women are more complex than ever, and they are challenges that come

inherently and inevitably from being female. Both deeply personal and statistically rich, *Wonder Women* is Spar's story and the story of our culture.



You Can Tell Just By Looking: And 20 Other Myths About LGBT Life and People

Michael Bronski 306.766 Bro

Three scholars and activists come together to unpack enduring, popular, and deeply held myths about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, culture, and life in America. Myths, such as "All Religions Condemn Homosexuality" and "Transgender People Are Mentally Ill," have been used to justify discrimination and oppression of LGBT people. Others, such as "Homosexuals Are Born That Way," have been embraced by LGBT communities and their allies. In discussing and dispelling these myths—including gay-positive ones—the authors challenge readers to question their own beliefs and to grapple with the complexities of what it means to be queer in the broadest social, political, and cultural sense.
